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[Reps Darrell Issa and Trey Gowdy: Do the right thing, right now, on D.C. Opportunity Scholarships](#)

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Issa: Bailouts Are Not Smart Reform - Roll Call The Obama Spoils System - Darrell Issa on National Review Online

House Speaker John Boehner, R-OH, has announced his intention to introduce a bill to reauthorize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program, a successful education reform that has provided scholarships up to \$7500 annually for more than 3,300 disadvantaged children living in the District of Columbia.

We fully support the program's reauthorization, which President Obama and the Democrat majority opposed in the last Congress.

Indeed, this is the time to do the right thing for thousands of under-served school children living in the shadow of the nation's Capitol. While the plight of D.C. schoolchildren and the reauthorization of this important program did not receive the attention they deserved in the last Congress, as chairman of the committee and subcommittee with primary jurisdiction over the District of Columbia, we intend to correct this error.

This is National School Choice Week, and Congress faces an opportunity to seek market-oriented solutions to the crisis we face in American education at every level of public life – from federal agencies all the way down to the smallest kindergarten classroom.

Numerous challenges, as well as unwieldy federal bureaucracies, have left many public schools behind the curve in education. Many parents of children in troubled schools have already chosen the same option that Obama chose for his own children. They've enrolled them in the best private schools in the country.

Not every American parent, though, has the financial resources that the president and Members of Congress have. And in places like the District of Columbia, where less than half of public school students ever graduate, the need for immediate assistance and a radically new paradigm is urgent. Yet, many D.C. parents and their children have grown disillusioned by the President's refusal to honor promises already made.

In the spring of 2009, 216 students received letters stating they had been selected to receive the opportunity scholarship. Within weeks, however, the administration rescinded those offers. Republicans tried to allow for the ongoing enrollment of new students.

Democrats, however, opposed the measure and established an effective sunset for the program once the existing awards ran out. And this despite overwhelming evidence of the scholarship's success

According to The Heritage Foundation, several independent polls conducted between 2007 and 2009 showed that as many as 75 percent of District residents supported the continuation of the program.

Not only is the program popular, but it is cost-effective. In fact, it costs \$17,600 per year on average for every student attending D.C. public schools, more than \$10,000 over the cost of the scholarship.

But when it comes to America's schoolchildren, the end result is the most important metric. In this regard, students using an Opportunity Scholarship outperformed their public school counterparts across the board.

Moreover, the graduation rate among scholarship recipients is an impressive 91 percent, more than 23 points over the national average for public schools and significantly higher than the 49 percent rate for D.C. public schools.

Clearly, the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship Program is the rare case of something clearly right being done by Congress. Ending it was clearly wrong, and we now have a chance to correct it.

Today, we join Speaker Boehner's effort to reauthorize the D.C. Opportunity Scholarship and give new hope to impoverished families of the District of Columbia.

For thousands of children and their families who are looking for a way to end the cycle of poverty, break out of failing public schools, and receive the same kind of education that the president and many Members of Congress provide for their own children, this is the right thing to do.

Rep. Darrell Issa, R-CA, is chairman of the House Oversight and Government Reform

Committee. Rep. Trey Gowdy, R-SC, is chairman of the oversight subcommittee on the District of Columbia.